

App. No. 09/687,464
Amendment

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested. Claim 10 has been amended, claims 1-4, 7-9, 15-25, 28-32 and 36-42 have been canceled without prejudice, and no claims have been added. Therefore, claims 5-6, 10-14, 26-27 and 33-35 remain pending in the application.

Information Disclosure Statements

Applicants recently mailed yet another Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) for this application on June 18, 2004. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the references cited therein and return a signed and initialed copy of the PTO-1449 Form with the next paper for this application.

Applicants also note that four Supplemental Information Disclosure Statements (IDS) were previously mailed to the USPTO for this application on June 4, 2003, August 1, 2003, August 6, 2003 and August 29, 2003, respectively. As of this date, we are not in receipt of the signed and initialed copies of the respective PTO-1449 Forms for these supplemental IDSSs. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the references cited therein and return a signed and initialed copy of each PTO-1449 Form with the next paper for this application.

Advisory Action Requested

If this amendment does not result in a Notice of Allowance, Applicants respectfully request a timely Advisory Action.

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Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 11-14 and 33-35 are allowed.

Applicants also acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claim 10 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base and intervening claims. Applicants have amended claim 10 to place it in independent form, which means that it is now in a condition for allowance.

In addition, Applicants submit that the Examiner should have also indicated that claims 5-6 and 26-27 are also allowed since these claims were indicated as having allowable subject matter in the previous office action (mailed 9/16/03) and there are no specific rejections of these claims in the present Office Action. Applicants had previously amended claims 5 and 26 to place them in independent form in their last amendment. Therefore, Applicants assert that claims 5-6 and 26-27 are allowed.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-4, 7, 8, 21, 22-25, 28, 29 and 42 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,680,534 to Yamato et al. ("Yamato et al.") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,211,453 to Kurakake et al. ("Kurakake et al."). The Examiner also rejected claims 9 and 30-32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamato et al. in view of Kurakake et al., and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,281,420 to Suzuki et al. ("Suzuki et al. ('420)'), and the Examiner rejected claims 15-20 and 36-41 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamato et al. in view of Kurakake et al., and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,150,598 to Suzuki

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et al. ("Suzuki et al. ('598)"). Applicants respectfully traverse all of these rejections.

Applicants have canceled all of these claims without prejudice for reasons unrelated to patentability. As such, these rejections are now moot and the application is in a condition for allowance.

As mentioned above, there are no specific rejections of claims 5-6 and 26-27 in the present Office Action. Therefore, Applicants assert that claims 5-6 and 26-27 are allowed.

No Fees Believed to be Due

Fees were previously paid for a total of 42 claims with 10 claims being independent claims. The above amendment has resulted in there now being a total of 12 claims with 7 claims being independent claims. Thus, no fees are believed to be due.

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CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that the above amendments and remarks place the pending claims in a condition for allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. However, should there remain any outstanding issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone the undersigned at (858) 552-1311 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 6/28/04



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